

Arius and Athanasius

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Assuredly this raving production never came from the pen of Constantine, and it bears no resemblance to his ordinary style. The resounding platitude with which it opens, "An evil interpreter is really the image and counterpart of the Devil/" leads us confidently to acquit the Emperor of its authorship and ascribe it to some anonymous and unknown ecclesiastic desirous at once of edifying and terrifying the faithful*

We can only surmise the circumstances which worked upon the Emperor's mind and caused his complete change of front with respect to Arianism and its exponents. Sozomen, indeed, attributes it wholly to the influence of his sister, Constantia. According to an Arian legend quoted by that historian, it was revealed to the Princess in "a vision from God" that it was the exiled bishops who held the true orthodox doctrine and, therefore, that they had been unjustly banished. She worked upon the impressionable mind of her brother, and the two bishops were recalled. When Constantine asked whether they still held the Nicene doctrines to which they had subscribed, they replied that they had assented, not from conviction, but from the fear lest the Emperor should be disgusted at the dissensions among the Christians, and revert to paganism. This curious story certainly tends to confirm the tradition that it was Constantia who was the court patroness of the Arians. She had been for years Empress in the palace of Nicomedia, and it is easy to suppose that the very able Bishop of that city had established a strong ascendancy